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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on one secondary social studies teacher's efforts to engage students in learning about self, others, and the world. Modes of presentation and learning activities are the specific focus. Observations occurred during 160 class periods in four different social studies classrooms, tenth-grade world geography, eleventh-grade U.S. history, twelfth-grade international relations, and a 9-12 grade ancient civilizations. Over 20 interviews were conducted, along with observations of the school's collaborative decision-making meetings, the social studies department's meetings, a union meeting, a student club meeting, and a professional gathering at a nearby university. School documents were analyzed, including organizational publications and teachers' syllabi, supplemental readings, and handouts. The study attempts to link student engagement in social studies classrooms with teachers' willingness to interrupt students' expectations of what class structure should be, to assume a wide range of teaching roles, and to provide students with opportunities to meaningfully interact with one another. Contains 26 references. (EH)

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Interrupting Ordinary Expectations in the Social Studies

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Interrupting Ordinary Expectations in the Social Studies

In the United States, the controversy surrounding the national history standards has—if nothing else—heightened the public's interest in the content of social studies education. If this surge in public interest expands to include broader interest in the nature of students' experiences in social studies classrooms, it will represent a break with recent history which suggests that the public's interest in social studies education peaks when textbooks are written and reviewed, innovative curricula are introduced, or controversial standards are proposed. In this paper, I try to create broader interest in the nature of students' experiences in the social studies. Specifically, I describe, interpret, and evaluate one social studies teacher's efforts to engage students in learning about self, others, and the world. In doing so, I identify the regularities of schooling that complicate teachers' efforts to engage students and illustrate how innovative modes of presentation and creative learning activities can heighten student engagement in social studies classrooms.[1]

To understand students' classroom experiences, one must examine more than instructional content. Hawthorne's study of four eighth grade English classrooms (1992) illustrates the need for a broader perspective. Teachers, Hawthorne explains, make choices along five curricular dimensions. She writes, "Teachers make . . . decisions daily by selecting content, texts and materials, modes of presentation, learning activities, and evaluation methods to construct classroom curriculum" (1). In this paper I focus upon the choices one secondary social studies teacher makes in two of the five curricular dimensions—modes of presentation and learning activities. I purposely elevate these curricular dimensions in response to social studies education discussions—both outside, and in many cases, inside the academy—that focus almost exclusively on the content of social studies instruction and the texts and materials social studies teachers use.

The Intransigence of Traditional Education

Several researchers, particularly John Goodlad (1984), have examined schooling with sufficient scope to generalize about modes of presentation and learning activities.[2] Studying thirty-eight schools in thirteen communities in seven sections of the country, Goodlad found that students learn passivity "virtually from the beginning" (233). Studying hundreds of classrooms, he concluded that by the end of elementary school, a narrow range of repetitive instructional activities favoring passive student behavior dominates. Specifically, he argues that nearly one hundred percent of the elementary classes and ninety percent of the junior high classes were "almost entirely teacher dominated with respect to seating, grouping, content, materials, use of space, time utilization, and learning activities" (229).

Furthermore, Goodlad argues that these patterns are more pronounced in social studies classrooms and that upper elementary school students liked social studies less than any other

connoisseurship and criticism encourages researchers to experience and account for nuance, notice and interpret subtleties, and to appreciate and explain the salient qualities that matter educationally (Uhrmacher 1991). The function of the education critic is to render a vivid description, interpretation, and evaluation of classroom and school life. In description, the educational critic uses narrative to display the essential and often subtle qualities of the situation experienced. The interpretive aspect of educational criticism explores the meanings and consequences of educational events (Eisner 1991, p. 95). The evaluative aspect assesses the educational significance of events described and interpreted.

In conducting the larger study, I spent two months observing 160 class periods in four different social studies classrooms: tenth grade World Geography, eleventh grade United States History, twelfth grade International Relations, and ninth through twelfth grade Ancient Civilizations. In addition, I conducted over twenty interviews. Despite hectic schedules, the teachers were extremely accessible. Consequently, I spent time in their classrooms before and after school, between classes, and during lunch. I also observed the school's collaborative decision-making meetings, the social studies department's meetings, a union meeting, a student club meeting, and a professional gathering at a nearby university. Besides notes from these activities and interview transcripts, I collected and analyzed school documents that included the proposal to create the school, informational pamphlets, accountability reports, newspaper articles, press releases, the minutes from collaborative decision-making meetings, the student newspaper, and newsletters. Also, I collected and analyzed the teachers' syllabi, supplemental readings, and handouts. I read, re-read, and coded all of this information until what Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckman (1973; as cited in Eisner 1991a, 110) call "typifications," individual incidents that were more characteristic of the teachers' classrooms than aberrant or exceptional, began to emerge. These typifications formed the basis of the descriptive sections.

Irwin Olsen

Thin, 6'2", in his late forties, Irwin Olsen attended a neighboring university in the mid 60s on a swimming scholarship. After completing a Bachelors in History with a minor in Geography, Irwin began teaching in 1967. Among other goals, Irwin hopes to empower his students. He explains, "The goal is to get the students to wrestle with who they are and what they're learning and as a result of that process to be much more powerful and much stronger in what they are able to do." An active member of the Global Studies Consortium, National Council for Geographic Education, and the National Geographic Society's teacher consultant network, Irwin describes his training in social studies and global education as "extensive." He summarizes his experience by joking, "There is significant training that I think, at least I hope, prepares me for this craziness."

Tenth Grade World Geography

A lesson in geography, Irwin's classroom suffers from its location. Shoreline Boulevard runs below the classroom and warm temperatures force Irwin to keep the windows open. Consequently, he and his thirty-one sophomore students are subjected to the traffic noise that ebbs and flows in relation to the nearby stop light. Thirty-six desks, classically arranged in six symmetrical rows, communicate a sense of order in the square classroom. The disorder of the larger world is evident in the sounds that pervade the classroom. Inadvertently and inevitably, I'm drawn to the vehicles that pass below—car, car, truck, motorcycle, car. Predominantly green, the floor is mixed with judicious flicks of beige and white. The barren walls are pale and lifeless. I consider the total environment. Altogether, the dusty floor, drab walls, and empty bulletin boards create an uninspiring learning environment.

Monday—Nations and States

Two questions are written on the board: "Nations—What are yours?" and "What difference do nations make?" Irwin wastes no time in initiating the activity:

> On Friday, we were discussing the Nation of Islam, the National Organization of Women, the Aryan Nation, and their different goals. Trying to define 'nation' proved quite difficult. Today, I'd like you to write down all the national groups that you belong to. Then, I'm going to ask you to stand up and introduce yourself to one another, shake hands, and tell one another what you identify your nations as. For example, 'Hello, I'm Mr. Olsen and I first identify myself as an American. Second. . . .' Is it pretty clear what I'm expecting?

The students, confused or embarrassed, stare at their open notebooks. "Come on," Irwin says resolutely, "stand up and start introducing yourselves to one another." Slowly, the students approach one another and conversations begin to flow. Ten minutes later the students sit casually on their desk tops visiting with one another. Next, Irwin instructs the students to write two sentences describing, "What difference does it make what your nations are?"

Afterwards, he provides each student with a handout, "Nation-States and Their Power." The handout explores the meaning of nationality and includes a passage by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe. After reading the passage, Irwin asks, "Any questions, any questions? Who can interpret the passage? Does Achebe help us understand the meaning of nation?" Either sincerely confused by the excerpt, or conditioned to trust teachers to eventually answer their own queries, the students look down at their handouts and silently enter into a stand off. The students outlast Irwin who summarizes, "Achebe sees himself as Black, African, Nigerian, and Ibo." Similarly, attempts to solicit interpretations of this definition are met with blank stares. Irwin concedes, "Sometimes the

line between ethnic groups and nations isn't clear. 'Nation' is real hard to pin down. Real hard." "For the remaining twenty minutes, I'd like you to write an essay. I'd like you to write on the power that nations have over you." To the relief of everyone, Darije, a Yugoslav student, says, "I don't understand." Drawing on the handout, examples from the book, and his personal life, Irwin patiently elaborates. After explaining the directions again, he asks Katie to explain the essay back to him. Following her successful explanation, Irwin asks Darije to explain it as well.

"No, I got it." he replies.

While the students write, Irwin circulates through the rows, responds to questions, and whispers "eight minutes left," "four minutes left." Finally, he announces, "Okay, please finish up. Make sure your name is on it and pass it up."

Tuesday—Ethnic Conflict and National Boundaries

In reviewing the previous night's reading, Irwin reminds the students that Israel and Palestine identify themselves as separate entities based upon religious and linguistic differences. Briefly discussing Judaism, Islam, Hebrew, and Arabic, Irwin asks, "What does each claim?"

"Land," several students softly and correctly answer.

Next, Irwin passes out maps and introduces a simulation entitled, "Tierra." "Today," he begins, "we're going to look at a fictional situation where four distinct groups of people share the same land. You'll have to decide which nations get what land." In contrasting shades of gray, the map shows the overlapping ethnic groups as well as oil reserves, copper, a river, mountains, swamp land, and several towns. "On the back of the paper," Irwin continues, "write who the Ratz are—fierce, proudly independent, poor, mountain people. . . . Next, please locate the Macs. The Macs have traditionally fought the Spyks. They're historic enemies." After identifying each group and outlining their competing interests, the students number off. Afterwards, Irwin announces, "Ones, you're Ratzs, Twos Semples, Threes Macs, Fours Spyks, Fives United Nations representatives." Pointing to the four corners, Irwin says, "Ones up here. Twos over here. Threes back there. Fours back there. Fives in the middle."

Next, Irwin moves from group to group further explaining the directions. He slides his desk chair across the floor to a group of three students in the back, places his hands behind his head and reminds them that their primary objective is to "make sure your nation's interests are taken care of." Next, he slides to a group of four and listens to their discussion. They pause and Irwin suggests that they discuss economic issues and access to water. "Remember," Irwin reminds them, "you can't move people." "And make sure that all four of you agree on your plan of action." They ask about a possible solution and Irwin says, "Sure you can do that. You just have to get the other groups to agree. They have different national interests and may not agree."

After helping each group get started, Irwin joins the three United Nations representatives and informs them, "You have the toughest job. You have to help the four groups compromise."

The students are engaged and compete for Irwin's attention. Simultaneously, I strain to make sense of the animated and overlapping discussions. I am seated closest to the Macs, represented by Rosa, Mary, and Shakeel, a friendly, but shy African-American student. Rosa, Mary, and Shakeel prepare to negotiate on behalf of the Macs. Mary dominates, Rosa interrupts on occasion, and Shakeel is content to listen.

Mary summarizes their plan, "Basically, we have all our necessities covered. We're taking a part of the Spyks land, but we will give them a portion of our island."

"What about our oil?" Rosa interrupts.

"Don't worry about it," Mary replies. "The swamp will block access to it."

"What do you mean?" Rosa asks.

Mary explains her point, "You know how your hair sometimes gets wrapped around the post of your earrings? Well, that's what happens to propellers in a swamp."

Rosa smiles. "Oh, I get it."

"Now, as representatives of your respective countries," Irwin interrupts, "you are going to negotiate an agreement that will work for everyone." Three new groups, each consisting of a Spyk, Ratz, Mac, and Semple, quickly take shape and I wonder when Irwin assigned new numbers.

As soon as the negotiations begin, Hector angrily announces, "Leave the oil out of it or I'll declare war!" Irwin drifts over and Hector turns to him and complains, "They don't want to compromise. They're being greedy. They're saying just because I'm a mountain person, I don't get any land."

Although Irwin ignores his plea, his fellow representatives cannot. One responds, "Okay, you all can have half. But you all some stingy people. Just leave us one mountain, okay?"

Next, Irwin instructs the United Nation representatives to introduce themselves to the negotiating teams. One of the representatives, a Vietnamese-American student wastes no time. Thinh slides her desk into the nearest circle and explains, "Hey you guys, I'm your U.N. representative." Next, she listens to Hector manipulate a more passive negotiator.

Brashly, he argues, "One half of your mountains for one fourth of our oil? You guys gotta be crazy! You guys are actually richer than us. You can cut down some trees, build homes, build a ski resort, start a zoo."

After listening for a few minutes, Thinh has heard enough. Intervening, she boldly asserts, "Look, the Spyks will get the oil, the Macs will get the copper, the Ratz will get the valley, everyone will share the water."

Stunned, Roberto sorts through the ultimatum and decides, "We need oil too and we need copper."

Instantaneously, Thinh proposes, "Well then, trade with someone. And if you don't like it, you won't get anything." Literally interpreting her role, she adds, "I'm deciding for you guys right now. It's my job."

As the negotiations continue, a few students get up from their desks, walk between the groups and eavesdrop on other discussions. Simultaneously, Irwin writes on the board, "Where did your two groups compromise? Who was the most influential national representative in your group and why? How does this simulation show the real world?" Facing the board, Irwin detects the movement and asks the students to return to their respective groups. Next, he informs the United Nations representatives to prepare a brief report on the settlement they helped negotiate. "Five more minutes comrades. I hope you've hammered out a compromise."

Five minutes later, Irwin directs the U.N. representatives to three seats in the front of the room and announces, "U.N. reps, on behalf of the world community, thank you for helping negotiate compromise solutions that appeal to everyone. Truly, you are skilled diplomats." Thinh's group rolls their eyes and exchange smiles at the generous introduction.

Speaking quickly, the United Nation representatives take turns summarizing their negotiated agreements. The first representative begins explaining, "Everyone in our group agreed. But, the Macs were kind of reluctant. We increased the Semples land to separate the Macs and Anti-Macs. . . ."

Interrupting Ordinary Expectations

In these teaching episodes, contrasting modes of presentation and learning activities contributed to different levels of student engagement. Why were Irwin's students more engaged on Tuesday than on Monday? On one level, Irwin performed well on Monday. For example, the topic was meaningful. In an international relations class, it is important to be able to distinguish between nations and states. In addition, in order to make the notion of "nation" more accessible, Irwin introduced the views of an African novelist. Also, he asked questions and provided examples to illustrate what are essentially abstract concepts. Finally, his delivery was animated. Despite this, his students listened passively without answering his questions, and more importantly, without asking their own. Again, why, in this context, were the students so indifferent?

Ira Shor's liberatory theory (1987) informs this question. Synthesizing progressive learning ideas, Paulo Freire's writings, and his own teaching experience, Shor suggests that students are more inclined to become active learners as teachers assume a wider range of instructional roles. Shor's description of a liberatory classroom may help explain Irwin's limited success. He writes:

> The liberatory classroom continually changes shape in response to changing student needs. . . . Each mode fulfills a concrete developmental service: workshop, studio, skill and counseling center, consciousness-raising group, kiosk-news service, and library. . . . The important thing is to *interrupt ordinary expectations of what class structure will be*. . . . (emphasis added, 119-120)

Conceivably, Irwin's performance was overshadowed by his students' expectations of what class structure should be. By inadvertently upholding a traditional classroom form—standing in front of the room and addressing rows of students, and a traditional communication pattern—the teacher talking to the students and the students passively listening, Irwin may have unwittingly bolstered what Shor refers to as the "authority-dependence" of students (xii).

Recall that Irwin's students were more engaged on Tuesday. For example, Hector's involvement took an emotional form when he declared, "Leave the oil out of it or I'll declare war!" Mary engaged Rosa as she compared "how your hair sometimes gets wrapped around the posts of your earrings" with "what happens to propellers in a swamp." Also, near the end of the period, the students got up from their desks and begin to eavesdrop on one another's discussions. Most telling, the students continued to negotiate as they left the room.

In using the simulation, Irwin interrupted the students' expectations of what class structure should be. More specifically, he converted the classroom into an international negotiations center and assumed a much wider range of roles including organizer, facilitator, encourager, and discussion leader. Liberatory theory promotes interrupting students' expectations of what class structure should be by assuming a wide range of teaching roles. Shor explains:

> At times, the teacher may simply be a *convenor* of the class hours. In other circumstances, the teacher may be called upon to be a *facilitator* of a special study or project needed by the class. Still other functions are *advocate* for a perspective missing in the discussion or *adversary* to a line of thought or to a kind of oppressive behavior appearing in the discussion. The class may call upon the teacher to be a *lecturer* on a body of information or a problem . . . which will propel the class across an impasse. On occasion, the teacher may serve as *recorder* of the sessions, whose minutes enable the class to examine its own learning process.

> Sometimes the teacher will need to be a *mediator* for divisive tendencies in the class, and at other times the teacher will be a *clearinghouse* or *librarian* through which resource materials pass.[4] (1987, 102)

In addition, on Tuesday, Irwin stepped to the side of the instructional stage. For example, when Hector complained, "They don't want to compromise. They're being greedy." Irwin ignored his plea. Shor refers to this as "withering away":

> 'Withering away' is a metaphor for the teacher's balance between saying too much and saying too little; enough withdrawal to create a vacuum for student assertion, enough direction to structure a critical inquiry. The teacher has to be careful not to substitute his or her own words or activity for the students' activity. (xii-xiii)

In Shor's thinking, teachers will learn to strike this delicate balance as they assume a wide range of instructional roles and interrupt students expectations of what class structure should be.

In assuming a wider range of teaching roles and interrupting students expectations of what class structure should be, new patterns of communication emerged in Irwin's classroom, specifically student to student. Shor notes that "students addressing each other without mediation by the teacher, but only mediated by a commitment to the inquiry . . . amounts to an extraordinary change in the classroom gestalt" (110). Irwin's experience suggests that heightened student engagement accompanies this extraordinary change in the classroom gestalt. More generally, it appears as if student engagement corresponds to a teacher's willingness to assume a wide range of teaching roles and to interrupt students' expectations of what class structure should be.

Innovation vs. Convention

These teaching episodes point to an underlying tension in Irwin's instruction. On the one hand, Irwin has progressive intentions and is an articulate critic of traditional education. On the other hand, life in his classroom attests to the power of the school's organizational structure to preserve conventional pedagogy. Innovation is evident; however, convention predominates. Rather than blame the victim, my intent is to explore examples of what Sarason (1982) describes as the regularities of schooling and to illustrate how they contribute to conventional tendencies. In the context of Irwin's second period World Geography class, the regularities of schooling include the nature of his classroom, his students' expectations of what class structure should be, an untenable workload, and professional isolation. Collectively, these factors complicate Irwin's effort to heighten student engagement.

The regularities of schooling take tangible and intangible forms. Irwin is most conscious of the former. For example, he knows that the nature of his classroom contributes to conventional tendencies. He reflects:

> There are interactive disk programs for computers out that you can project on an overhead using a computer. They are stunning, first rate, absolutely magnificent. I can't use those. I don't have any technology. If you look at this classroom, at this moment, you're looking at a 1930s classroom. This is a 1930s classroom. It is incredibly frustrating.

Later he adds:

> I would like to get the kids out into the world. I would like to put them on a serendipitous bus and take them places and say, 'We've been talking about Islam and here's a mosque. I want you to walk into the mosque with your shoes off and I want you to see what this is all about.'

A second regularity of schooling, the negative and cumulative effect of traditional schooling on Irwin's students' attitudes towards classroom life, also contributes to conventional tendencies. The limitations imposed by the conventional classroom are relatively straightforward in comparison to the negative and cumulative effect of traditional schooling on high school students' attitudes towards classroom life. This intangible limit merits special attention. In the course of their elementary and junior high school experiences, students are socialized to a set of expectations about school and classroom life. Among other values, researchers have shown that students learn delayed gratification, compliance, competitiveness, punctuality, and cognitive flexibility (Dreeben 1968; Jackson 1968; Sarason 1982; Apple 1990). Collectively, these values form what Eisner has labeled "the implicit curriculum" which rests on the premise that "schools teach far more than they advertise" (1985, 87). These values, most notably compliance or student passivity, influence Irwin's perception of what is possible and consequently contribute to conventional tendencies.

From the first day of class, Irwin's students expect certain regularities. Foremost among those is that he will do most of the talking and if they politely listen everything will be okay. Irwin reflects:

> The majority of the students that I teach . . . are more comfortable with certain methodologies. If I say open the book to such and such a page, answer these certain questions, they're comfortable with that because they've done it so much. When I give them problems, and say here is an immensely complex problem, I want you to analyze these five parts of the problem, they aren't comfortable with it because they haven't had to do very much of it.

More specifically, this expectation contributes to traditional patterns of communication in Irwin's classroom which is evident in the use of questions. Generally, Irwin asks two types of questions. Literal questions, the most frequent, are intended to establish or review a fact. "What does both

Israel and Palestine claim?" Typically, Irwin poses literal questions to the entire class; as a result, there is limited accountability and typically, following a short pause, Irwin supplies the answer. Occasionally, Irwin poses literal questions to individuals. Some still opt not to answer; others offer as economical an answer as possible, usually one word or a short phrase. Literal questions do not promote inquiry, they simply enable Irwin to establish or review factual information and to collect his thoughts before continuing with his point.

Reflective questions are less common. "Does Achebe help us understand the meaning of nation?" These questions are intended to facilitate analytical thought. Typically posed to the entire class, students are unaccustomed to answering these types of questions. Consequently, after a silent pause, Irwin pursues one of two courses. He either simplifies and restates the original question or answers it himself. Similarly, student responses to reflective questions tend towards one to five words.

Authentic questions are posed by students and are the least common. "Why would these countries submit to a United Nations agreement?" Authentic questions are one of the more telling indicators of student interest. The absence of them in Irwin's class attests to the intellectual "Berlin Wall" that Sarason eloquently describes. However, it would be simplistic and an egregious mistake to attribute the absence of authentic questions entirely to the legacy of the students' prior schooling.

A third regularity of schooling, Irwin's untenable workload, also contributes to conventional tendencies. For example, it is important to Irwin that his four sections of World Geography proceed at the same pace in order to avoid exacerbating the arduous task of planning ten lessons a week—five World Geography lessons and five International Relations lessons. Irwin cannot plan for authentic questions, they are asked spontaneously. Consequently, they inevitably alter his plans. This presents a dilemma that requires Irwin to balance two competing interests. On one hand, he wants to encourage authentic questions with thoughtful responses. On the other hand, he wants his classes to proceed at the same pace in order to keep lesson planning time to a minimum. Collectively and subtly, Irwin's work load pressures him to pressure his classes to proceed at the same pace. In the context of his work environment, Irwin's adaptation is rational; nevertheless, flexibility is compromised, critical inquiry is suppressed, and student interest is lessened.

To keep his classes together, Irwin assigns fixed periods of time to class assignments. For example, he typically concludes directions with, "Take fifteen minutes to complete this." Although this enables Irwin to keep his classes together, it presents trade-offs. One trade-off is the inevitable frustration experienced by students who cannot finish in the allotted time or who finish too early.

Additionally, fixed time frames unintentionally limit authentic questions. Students may have questions, but in the context of limited time, decide not to pose them. In turn, this too widens the gap between the intended lesson and the students' interests. The absence of authentic questions also precludes unanticipated outcomes. Therefore, in the interests of keeping classes aligned, depth and breadth of coverage are sacrificed as well.

Finally, Irwin's ability to reflect on the implications of these regularities of schooling are limited by the tremendous isolation he experiences at Shoreline. The isolation that teachers' experience at large high schools is well documented (Sizer 1984; Flinders 1989; Sarason 1990; Fullan 1991; Hawthorne 1992), however the magnitude of it at Shoreline was surprising and immediately evident at a social studies department meeting. To cultivate improved relations, the new department chairwoman suggested going to a nice restaurant and having a departmental lunch after a planned morning of staff development. Sign-up sheet in hand, she asked her eleven colleagues, "Who is interested?" Everyone hesitated. Their nervousness and reluctance revealed that this was a radical proposal. Later, I learned that a few department members openly dislike one another and the others typically eat alone in their classrooms. Slowly, they began to commit. "This is the standard Coastview School District high school," Irwin later reflected. "Everybody is in their cubicle and everybody does their little cubicle thing." "With rare exceptions," he added, "the district does not promote the idea of professional interchange and people getting together and people wrestling with what I consider important issues." The depth of Irwin's isolation echoed during a pre-dawn interview as well. Leaning forward in his chair, he looked deep within me, discounted the administrators who sit in his room a few minutes every other year in order to evaluate him, and quietly and sadly confided, "You are the first person in twenty five plus years who has sat in my room and observed me teach who is not a student teacher."

Despite his isolation, Irwin remains a reflective educator. In light of his work load, I asked him if he ever had time to think about his instruction and he replied:

> Oh yes, oh yes. I have a little journal that I keep at home. Ideas that seem to go well with ideas that didn't seem to go well. And things that I need to modify and days where I can identify things that were dumb first and done poorly second. And where the kids were telling me 'this doesn't work, do something different.' And I review that before I present something.

Admirably, Irwin has kept his journal for twenty years; however, rethinking the regularities of schooling, including teacher isolation paradoxically, requires collaborative action. It will be difficult for Irwin to discriminate between the types of questions he asks, or to plot the number of authentic questions his students pose, or to critically reflect on the implications of fixed time frames

by himself. That type of analysis requires a certain distance. Conceivably, Irwin and his colleagues can provide that type of analysis for one another if they are provided opportunities and are encouraged to observe and discuss their teaching with one another.

Implications

To engage students in the social studies, Irwin's experience illustrates the importance of interrupting students' expectations of what class structure should be, assuming a wide range of teaching roles, and providing students with opportunities to meaningfully interact with one another. His experience also demonstrates the need to continue identifying and addressing the regularities of schooling that complicate teachers' efforts to heighten student engagement. Again, in Irwin's case, the nature of his classroom, his students' expectations of what class structure should be, his untenable workload, and his professional isolation hinder his efforts to engage students.

This inquiry raises several questions. Among them, who wittingly or unwittingly perpetuates these regularities? Are these regularities intractable features of classroom and school life? If not, who are the actors that Irwin, and teachers more generally, may need to work with to overcome them? I do not believe these regularities of schooling are intractable features of classroom and school life, and in concluding, I attempt to identify the actors teachers like Irwin will need to join with to create classroom and school environments more conducive to engaging students.

Addressing the first regularity of schooling, what Irwin refers to as " a 1930s classroom" may prove most challenging. In all likelihood, it will involve the most actors as well. Reed E. Hundt, a former secondary social studies teacher and current Chair of the Federal Communications Commission, asserts that the "rhetoric and hyperbole about the information highway and education boil down to a simple principle." "From their individual classrooms," Hunt argues "teachers must be able to send and receive faxes, upload and download information from communications satellites, have access to interactive television programming, communicate with parents at home over telephone lines, and join virtual communities of their colleagues on-line" (West 1995).

The estimated costs of wiring the nation's schools for the information age vary widely from $10 billion to the hundreds of billions of dollars; consequently, one wonders whether Irwin's district—and others throughout the country—can afford the initial costs associated with the technological innovations Hundt identifies. Similarly, one wonders whether these innovations will make it easier for Irwin and other teachers to interrupt students' expectations of what class structure should be, assume a wide range of teaching roles, and provide students with opportunities to meaningfully interact with one another. At minimum, Hundt suggests that the

Congress, the Federal Communications Commission, state and local governments, private industry—particularly the cable-television and telephone industries, and educational software developers, will help determine whether public schools can afford and benefit from the aforementioned technologies. Hundt also advises educators and parents to "become involved at the state and local levels to insure that their needs are not overlooked as companies rush to cash in on the telecommunications revolution" (West 1995).

Overcoming the second regularity, students' expectations of what class structure should be, will prove daunting as well. Research suggests that students' begin forming expectations of what class structure should be during their elementary and middle school years; as a result, to transform their students' expectations of what class structure should be, secondary social studies teachers must depend upon elementary and middle school social studies teachers to assume a wide range of teaching roles, to provide young students with opportunities to purposefully interact with one another, and ultimately, to instill interest in the social studies.

Teacher educators have an integral role to play in helping beginning teachers interrupt their students expectations of what class structure should be as well. This assertion makes one wonder whether teacher educators model to prospective secondary social studies teachers how to interrupt students' expectations of what class structure should be, how to assume a wide range of teaching roles, and how to design learning activities that encourage meaningful student interaction. In using innovative modes of presentation and creative learning activities themselves, teacher educators may help student teachers develop into creative curriculanists with broad pedagogical competence. Also at issue is whether teacher educators and cooperating teachers encourage prospective teachers to experiment with interrupting students' ordinary expectations of what class structure should be during their field experiences.

Finally, teachers will need to help parents understand the changes associated with interrupting students' expectations of what class structure should be. Parents will need time to come to terms with the incongruity between their childrens' schooling and their own.

To reduce Irwin's and other teachers' untenable workloads and lessen their professional isolation, the third and fourth regularity, teachers, administers, other school based management team members, educational reformers, and researchers will need to work together. One ambitious and promising reform effort, Theodore Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools (1984), proposes limiting total student loads per secondary teacher to 80 students, forming small interdisciplinary teams of teachers within large schools, and amending the traditional six period school day to provide teachers with additional time for individual and collective planning. However, research

on Coalition schools (Muncey and McQuillan 1993) suggests there are "no quick fixes or miracle cures." Researchers in Coalition schools have observed that "even when there seems to be consensus that change is needed and even when dedicated and well-intentioned people are trying to bring it about, issues and problems—often unanticipated—arise that threaten and impede the change process almost from its inception." The researchers acknowledge that "the structure, dominant pedagogy, and disciplinary divisions of American secondary schools have remained relatively unchanged for nearly 100 years." Consequently, they are mindful that "Change of the scope and nature currently being undertaken by the Coalition and others has no historical precedent."

Transforming classrooms, interrupting students' expectations of what class structure should be, reducing teachers' workloads, and lessening their professional isolation will not ensure that all students have positive experiences in social studies classrooms. However, we increase the likelihood that students will have more meaningful experiences in social studies classrooms as we better understand the ways that schools preserve conventional pedagogical practice.

In Closing

Too often, social studies education discussions narrowly focus upon the content of social studies instruction and the texts and materials social studies teachers use. In response, I have intentionally examined one social studies teacher's modes of presentation and learning activities to better understand students' experiences in social studies classrooms. In doing so, I have attempted to link student engagement in social studies classrooms with teachers' willingness to interrupt students' expectations of what class structure should be, to assume a wide range of teaching roles, and to provide students with opportunities to meaningfully interact with one another.

Dewey's (1938) and Sarason's (1990) perspectives on the purpose of schooling cast doubt on whether student engagement is a worthy aim in itself. Dewey argues that "Collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned." "For these attitudes are fundamentally what count in the future," he explains. "The most important attitude that can be formed is that of the desire to go on learning" (48). Similarly, in *The Predictable Failure of Educational Reform*, Sarason asks:

> Should not our aim be to judge whatever we do for children in our schools by the criterion of how we are fostering the desire to continue to learn about self, others, and the world, to live in the world of ideas and possibilities, to see the life span as an endless intellectual and personal quest for knowledge and meaning? (163)

If social studies classrooms are not engaging places, one cannot foster the desire to continue to learn about self, others, and the world. Therefore, if heightened student engagement is not a worthy aim in itself, it is a vital pre-condition upon which cultivating the desire to continue to learn about self, others, and the world rests. In transforming classrooms, interrupting students' expectations of what class structure should be, reducing teachers' workloads, and lessening their professional isolation, we create classroom and school environments more conducive to engaging students who may desire to continue learning about self, others, and the world.

Endnotes

1. I work from Fred Newmann's definition of engagement as "the student's psychological investment in learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills or crafts that academic work is intended to promote" (1989, 1). Admittedly difficult to assess, Newmann's phrase "psychological investment" suggests something that exceeds a narrow interest in grades and teacher approval. Thanks to John Zola for the lead.

2. See, for example, Theodore Sizer (1984) and E. Powell et al. (1985).

3. For a detailed review of the most recent comprehensive examination of social studies education see the 1977 and 1978 National Science Foundation studies (Weiss 1978; Wiley 1977; Stake and Easley 1978). These studies have been summarized by Shaver, Davis, and Helburn (1979) and by Project SPAN (Fancett and Hawke 1982). In short, the NSF studies reveal an absence of enthusiasm and creativity in social studies teaching. For additional insight into students' perceptions of the social studies see Schug, Todd, and Beery (1984). Thanks to John Zola for referring me to the NSF studies.

4. Dewey promotes this idea as well. He writes, "When education is based upon experience and the educative experience is seen to be a social process. . . the teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities" (1938, 59).

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